

Personas

The purpose of personas is to create reliable and realistic representations of your key audience segments for reference. They can be used to help understand the audience currently using your information product or can be built to provide a composite of the audience you intend to target. Personas are only as good as the research behind them and should be based on qualitative and some quantitative user research.

Effective personas

- Represent a major user group for your digital presence
- Express and focus on the major needs and expectations of the most important user groups
- Give a clear picture of the user's expectations and how they're likely to use the site
- Aid in uncovering universal features and functionality
- Describe real people with backgrounds, goals, and values

Benefits of Personas

Personas help to focus decisions surrounding site components by adding a layer of real-world consideration to the conversation. They also offer a quick and inexpensive way to test and prioritize those features throughout the development process.

In addition they can help:

- Stakeholders and leaders evaluate new site feature ideas
- Information architects develop informed wireframes, interface behaviors, and labeling
- Designers create the overall look and feel of the website
- System engineers/developers decide which approaches to take based on user behaviors
- Copy writers ensure site content is written to the appropriate audiences

Persona Goals

Personas development belongs at the beginning of the project, as personas can inform site functionality, help uncover gaps, or highlight new opportunities. You may develop one or more personas for a project but limit yourself to the main audiences for the site.

For any given project, creating only three or four personas is best. Remember that it is better to paint with a broad brush and meet the needs of the larger populations than try to meet the needs of everyone.

The goal of personas is not represent all audiences or address all needs of the site, but instead to focus on the major needs of the most important user groups.

Developing Personas

To ensure your personas are accurate representations of your users and have the support of your stakeholders throughout the process, you should:

Conduct user research

Who are your users and why are they using the system?

- What behaviors, assumptions, and expectations color their view of the system?
- Who is your audience?

Who is your target/desired audience?

- What is their background?
- What experiences have they had?
- What are they looking to accomplish?
- What are some challenges they face?
- What are some potential ways to address those challenges?
- What Persona Group (i.e. web manager) do they belong to?

Define the purpose and vision

- What is the purpose of the content/site/experience?
- What are the goals of the content/site/experience?

Describe the User

- Personal
 - What is the age of your person?
 - What is the gender of your person?
 - What is the highest level of education this person has received?
 - Fictional name
- Professional
 - Job titles and major responsibilities
 - How much work experience does your person have?
 - What is your person's professional background?
 - Why will they come to the site? (User needs, interests, and goals)
 - Where (or from whom) else is this person getting information about your issue or similar programs or services?
 - When and where will users access the site? (User environment and context)
- Source of information/knowledge
 - Where does your person get information from?
 - What sources of information does your person trust the most?
 - How would your person be able to understand the information?
 - What technological devices does your person use on a regular basis?
 - What software and/or applications does your person use on a regular basis?
 - Through what technological device does your user primarily access the web for information?
 - How much time does your person spend browsing the web every day?

User Motivation

- What is your person motivated by?
- What are they looking for?
- What is your person looking to do?
- What are his needs?
- Write a quote that sums up what matters most to the persona as it relates to your content/site/experience

Condense the research

Look for themes/characteristics that are specific, relevant, and universal to the system and its users.

Brainstorm: Organize elements into persona groups that represent your target users. Name or classify each group.

Refine: Combine and prioritize the rough personas. Separate them into primary, secondary, and, if necessary, complementary categories. You should have roughly 3-5 personas and their identified characteristics.

Make them realistic: Develop the appropriate descriptions of each personas background, motivations, and expectations. Do not include a lot of personal information. Be relevant and serious; humor is not appropriate.

Organize persona information in an easy to read, logical format.

Simple persona

A simple persona contains basic information about a typical user to include their role, goals and needs.

Globalchange.gov

Scientist Steve

Works as: Gov Researcher

My themes: Evaluate,
Research, Advise, Analyze



His role

- Expert in climate change
- Engages deeply with USGCRP

Goals



- Advance his work through collaboration with other researchers
- Evaluate and provide feedback on the work of other scientists
- Identify gaps in existing climate research & explore new research topics
- Showcase & promote their contributions to federal climate research



Needs

- Searchable repositories of info & data (dashboards)
- Streamlined access to resources, data, and tools from other agencies
- Traceable references & citations, consistent across organizations
- Visibility into other areas of climate research that may be related to their work
- Instructions & tutorials on how to access & analyze federal climate data

Complex persona

A complex persona contains more detailed information about a specific category of user. It can include a composite background made of typical information from many similar users, their goals, frustrations and challenges, desired feature and information on how they use technology or access information.



Sources:

<https://www.usability.gov/how-to-and-tools/methods/personas.html>

<https://www.digitalgov.gov>